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**THE
NIGHTLIFE
ISSUE**

710

AUGUST 11-24, 2022
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Andrew Walesch. Photo by Ian Walesch



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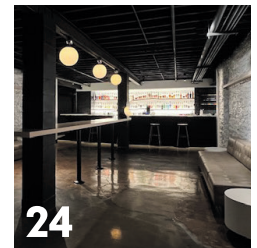
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What Happened To Our Nightlife?

BY RANDY STERN

Remember these lyrics...

I love the nightlife

I got to boogie

*On the disco 'round...**

That Alicia Bridges track from 1978 was a chestnut that keeps coming back at times. It reminds us of what it used to be. Us – LGBTQ people – having the time of our lives at places that welcomed us as shelters from the hate, discrimination, and downright ignorance about who we are.

Our nightlife was the bar, the club, the pub, the hangout where the drinks flowed, and our next ex-lover stood across the room waiting for you.

It was our introduction to LGBTQ life. It was a life that exists today, but it has evolved into something different. Bars and clubs change. Or, no longer exist. Only a few remain today at their original location.

Recently, I was reminiscing with a few friends about our nightlife adventures. The bar

now called the eagleBOLTbar was our “home” in the 2000s. Bear Bar Nights and other Leather/BDSM events took place – mostly in the underground part of the bar. Many tales to be told – far too many to fit in this column.

Our definition of nightlife has evolved with the times. For some of us, the places we used to hang out have been supplanted by other types of venues. While we remain a distinct culture, we also took the path towards becoming part of the mainstream of society. That is, as long as they welcome us at the door.

There are elements of our nightlife that have become digital in nature. Apps, websites, and other virtual methods have replaced in-person events. Partly – if not, mostly – thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over two years of this pandemic has challenged our want of live entertainment. Because things have eased a bit, venues have reopened and, as the younger folks say, “things are popping!”

It is because our nightlife is a sign of the existence of “intelligent life.” Perhaps LGBTQ life in the past – if not today.

This issue is dedicated to the expansive definition of nightlife. Not just for a few – but, for everyone!

It is now about finding artists within our community to follow and see at any given venue. It is about the reopening of spaces that we claim as our own. It is about our pursuits of having a good time wherever we go. It is about fulfilling our want of entertainment that is well-coming of us.

Your definition of nightlife is as open as our own definition of ourselves. Go boogie wherever you want to – or not. After all, it is your nightlife. ■

**Lyrics by Alicia Bridges and Susan Hutheson © 1978 Bike Music*

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Connecting Scattered Dots

BY E.B. BOATNER

Dad and I enjoyed our evening walks, pausing to scan the skies he'd point out to me various star pictures—"constellations," he explained—images the ancients saw fixed in the chaos: Cassiopeia, the Big and Little Dippers, Orion... I loved the sound of "Cassiopeia" but never could connect all the dots. I can still point out the Big Dipper (Ursa Major) though the Little (Ursa Minor) eludes, and I can spot the three stars of Orion's Belt.

The history of the telescope is a long and winding tale, each incremental change allowing the viewer to see farther and more clearly; convex objective and eyepiece, to Newton's 1668 addition of a reflector mirror, to achromatic lenses, to silvered glass mirrors to ... well on to the Hubble and now the Webb. We speak condescendingly of the Hubble as one might chuckle at a toddler's attempts to use a knife and fork, but each of those earlier dots had to be connected before the next prodigy could appear.

Growing older is a lot like those ancients, looking at the stars first through naked eyes, then trying to find better ways to connect those

starry dots and find a better path. Most of us use words, not telescopes to chart our daily journeys, and sometimes, as we connect more of our own dots, as we gain not only years, but wisdom, comprehending with this clearer, brighter light shown on our previous understanding of words the impact of those vocalizations.

Words that we now, illuminated, understand they can hurt or demean, especially when we who utter them, laugh and say, "Can't you take a joke?" or, "All I said was..." Sometimes the intention can be horrific if one pauses to consider the literal meaning literally.

Back in October, 1966, country singer Merle Haggard and the Strangers issued, "The Girl Turned Ripe and the Pickers Came Today." A specific age isn't mentioned, giving the imagination as large a range as the listener chooses, but witty as they may be, none of the lyrics imply consent, and the now ripe fruit has no say in the harvesting. I remember finding Haggard's lyrics amusing at the time, without pausing to consider their implications were they to be carried out.

Further back, I remember enjoying Stanley

Donen's 1954 splashy, romantic *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*—Russ Tamblyn was soo cute! Later, I learned it was drawn from Stephen Vincent Benet's 1938 short story "The Sobbin' Women," which plucked from Plutarch's *Life of Romulus* which detailed Romulus's organizing the Rape (or "Abduction," or "Kidnapping") of the Sabine Women—some thirty, all virgins save one—to provide wives for the men of the newly-founded city of Rome.

Back to 1951 when, at ten, I went to Canada with Dad to fish and "get away from it all." Rattling along a narrow back road, he shared a joke: A man walking by a cabin sees a mountain lion leap through the kitchen window. He runs to the owner who's outside sharpening his saw. "Hey mister," yells the passerby, "your missus inside? A huge mountain lion just jumped through the window!" Fellow keeps filing, finally spits out a chew, turns to the breathless fellow, and says, "Cat'll just have to take care of himself."

I laughed, then what I later learned was "subtext" dawned on me. I'd connected my first dots. ■

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Another Season With The Orpheum

BY BRETT BURGER

For the Orpheum, a new season means a new crop of previously Tony Award-Nominated and Award winning shows coming to the Twin Cities. These have ranged from blockbuster hits like the *Lion King* to even smaller known musicals, but still equally as incredible, like *The Band's Visit*. After some cancellations and rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hennepin Theatre Trust is back with a huge season. I'm happy to be sharing with you all the newest season from Hennepin Theatre Trust.

For more information and ticket sale information, visit <https://hennepintheatretrust.org/broadway/>.

WICKED

July 27 – August 28

On the heels of the blockbuster movie adaptation starring Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande, *Wicked* is flying its way back to the Twin Cities for a nearly month-long run. The untold story of the Witches of Oz takes place way before Dorothy and Toto dropped in. Two young women, one bubbly blonde and another born with emerald-green skin, go on an adventure of a life time as they understand their new surroundings, each other and more importantly themselves. With hits like *One Short Day*, *Popular* and *Defying Gravity*, this is surely not to be missed.

CATS

October 25-30

A forever classic, *Cats* has enchanted audiences across 30 countries and 15 different languages. Winner of 7 Tony Awards including Best Musical, *Cats* tells the story of one magical night where an extraordinary tribe of cats gathers for its annual ball to rejoice and decide which cat will be reborn. *Cats* is one of the few Andrew Lloyd Webber productions I have yet to see which is why I'm thrilled it's going to be returning to Minneapolis.

LES MISÉRABLES

December 6-18

Les Misérables is another classic that will be coming and a must see for any die hard theatre fan or someone dipping their toes into musical theatre for the first time. Set during the 19th century in France, *Les Misérables* tells a story of power, love, redemption and sacrifice. With a soaring score, this Tony-Award winning show features Broadway standards like *I Dreamed a Dream*, *On My Own*, and *One Day More*. Absolutely a must see!



Jennafer Newberry as Glinda and Lissa deGuzman as Elphaba in the National Tour of WICKED. Photo by Joan Marcus

HAIRSPRAY

January 10 – 15

Whether you're a fan of the movie or not, the live musical is always better. This Broadway musical comedy takes audiences on a hilarious ride with 16-year-old Tracy Turnblad. Set in 1960s Baltimore, Tracy has the chance to finally dance her way onto a popular TV show. *Hairspray* rarely gets produced even in local and regional theatre so it's absolutely the perfect time to see it!

TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

February 14-19

One of the greatest pieces of American literature is now not only a play but "the most successful American play in Broadway history" according to the *New York Times*. Based on the 1961 Harper Lee novel, the story follows two young children in a small town in Alabama. The coming of age story chronicles their childhood and their father, Atticus Finch, who is a lawyer and defending a black man falsely accused of rape. With themes of racial prejudice, innocence, justice and courage, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a classic staple in American literature.

Emmy Award Winning actor Richard Thomas will play the role of Atticus Finch in the national tour.

TINA – THE TINA TURNER MUSICAL

March 1 – 12

A biomusical that I'm extremely excited for, *Tina – The Tina Turner Musical* is next up. The show reveals a comeback story like no other, of a woman who dared to defy the bounds of racism, sexism and ageism to become the global queen of rock 'n' roll.

HAMILTON

April 4 – May 6

The cultural phenomenon that is *Hamilton* returns to Minneapolis. Based on the story of

America's Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, an immigrant from the West Indies who became George Washington's right-hand man during the Revolutionary War. With a book, music and lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton* brings a fresh and unique perspective on historical story telling through the lens of rap and hip-hop.

TOOTSIE

June 20 – 25

Sometimes there is nothing better than a simple comedic musical and that is what *Tootsie* claims to be. It tells the story of Michael Dorsey, a talented but difficult actor who struggles to find work until one-show stopping act of desperation lands him the role of a lifetime.

JAGGED LITTLE PILL

August 8-13

Featuring music based on Alanis Morissette's discography, *Jagged Little Pill* is about joy, love, heartache, strength, wisdom and life. It features what appears to be a perfect American family however they are struggling with addiction and trauma privately.

BEETLEJUICE

September 19-24

Quite possibly one of the shows I'm most excited to see again is *Beetlejuice*. After seeing it in 2019, I was pleasantly surprised. It's high camp, extremely entertaining, a visual spectacle and honestly really just a fun show. While normally I'm usually over the remake of movies and books into musicals, I was thrilled to see this going on tour. *Beetlejuice* is based on the beloved Tim Burton film of the same name and tells the story of Lydia Deetz, a strange and unusual teenager whose whole life changes when she meets a recently deceased couple and a demon with a thing for stripes. ■



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Shrimp al Ajillo

Neighborhood Sweetheart

BY CARLA WALDEMAR

If restaurants were likened to movie plots, dining at Estelle would be like the one where you marry the guy next door—the sweetie-to-be hiding in plain sight, waiting to be discovered when the studly hottie fails to deliver.

Estelle—that homespun sweetie—resides in St. Paul’s Mac-Groveland neighborhood, where on a recent Wednesday the sleek dining room (with chef’s counter) was packed and a backyard sundeck beckoned. Tall wooden fencing, complete with an under-sea mural backing a small clutch of umbrella tables, proved perfect for this steamy summer night.

So did the cocktail list. I savored a Return of the Mac Old Fashioned (\$13), constructed with house-made spice syrup and orange-sassafras bitters, while my companion got all girly with the Lawn Flamingo (\$11)—a highball of Pimm’s enhanced with everything from lychee to a long tongue of cucumber—“like a party in your mouth,” opined our server, who deserves a shout-out for den-mothering us through the delightful evening. The wine list merits applause as well, with many, many BTGs anchoring a list that favors pours from Spain, Italy and Portugal, in line with Estelle’s menu focus.

We happened to visit during Restaurant Week, where a three-course \$45 menu (with choices within each course listing) had been created to spotlight favorites on the kitchen’s regular list. Beginning our feast with the shrimp al ajillo was a no-brainer: It’s a show-stopper on a menu created by Chef Jason Hansen, who’s backpacked his way through Spain and Portugal and fired up stoves locally at 112 Eatery, Tilia, and others, as well as at Chicago’s noted Blackbird.

He learned, it’s clear, that simplicity and prime ingredients are the keys to honest, tasty and (mildly) inventive food. The plus-size shrimp proved sweet in taste and bouncy-fresh in texture, providing a perfect

canvas for a garlic butter sauce subtly enhanced with sweet peppers, dill and cilantro. The need to share with my partner barely won out over downright greed.

However, in return the bacalao fritters she ordered were passed in my direction, too, and eye-opening they were. I generally avoid bacalao—salt cod—as painfully salty, but not these. Tempered by mashed potato, the fritters went down well, guided by a flavor-brightening, habanero-enhanced tartar sauce.

For our main courses, we dithered over an eggplant parmesan, my weakness (among many) in an old-time Italian kitchen, until our server swayed our vote by agreeing that, yes, we could savor that favorite on many another menu, but here—here!—she counseled, go with something a little different.



Porchetta

We did, of course, starting with a pasta presentation that employed basil, sunflower seeds, little green tendrils of haricots verts and firm, sweet fingerling potatoes, all lightly dusted with Parmesan—a take-off on the bean-and-potato pasta-topping favored in, say, central Italy but rarely in central Minnesota.

The pork-driven second course also caught our eyes. Quantities of moist and tender, sweet-savory shreds enlivened what might be your grannie's Spanish rice, along with granny-averse shishito peppers, toum (a hard-working Middle-Eastern creamy garlic sauce) and sweet peppers: Spanish rice a pork-loving Spaniard would savor.

Or choose a cheeseburger, which reads like the classic it is, but is served with patatas bravas, those addictive and mildly spicy potato nuggets that serve as bar food throughout Spain.

On to dessert. Choose between what sounds like an over-the-top candy bar (yum!), Portuguese egg tarts, a peach pie cake, and "Snack Pack" budino. That budino—pudding—went down well: both the smooth milk chocolate version and its sidekick in vanilla. Bits of chewy brownies and a crunch of cocoa nibs add to the party.

The cake, born of fresh, sweet, juicy peaches, and moistened further with sour cream in the batter, employs dried flower petals and flowery St. Germain liqueur. It's good, but my socks stayed on. Plus, you're going to have to ask your server to explain all those fancy names for flowery flavors.

Bottom line: Estelle is a small neighborhood café too sweet to let the Mac-Groovers keep to themselves. ■

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Pride Journey: Charleston, SC

BY JOEY AMATO | PHOTOS BY JOEY AMATO

I am a huge lover of history and usually jump at the chance to visit any historic sites when I travel. What I didn't realize about Charleston, South Carolina is that I would be walking into a history book. To be perfectly honest, I didn't do much research before traveling to Charleston. Sometimes I like to visit a destination without any expectations.

One of the first things I did when I arrived was jump on a walking tour. Bulldog Tours organizes a variety of tours including haunted history, culinary and LGBTQ history tours, so of course that is the one I chose. My knowledgeable guide Zach and I spent two hours strolling around downtown Charleston visiting many of the historic sites of the city while he recanted tales of the city's harsh past. He also included some LGBTQ historical facts, and we visited some significant sites along the way.

Charleston was one of only three walled cities in North America and the historic society has imposed some of the strictest rules and regulations in the country to ensure that the city remains well-preserved. Charleston sits on a peninsula surrounded by two rivers which lead to the Atlantic Ocean, so it became one of the earliest port cities in the country due to its geography. It is also extremely walkable, giving it a European feel. I was able to walk almost everywhere I visited with the exception of a few off-the-beaten path restaurants.

A person can't visit Charleston without learning about its controversial past. Given its location as I described earlier, the city was a key port that was responsible for the sale and transport of enslaved Africans. Numerous plantations still exist throughout the region including McLeod Plantation, a former slave plantation located on James Island. The plantation is considered an important Gullah heritage site, preserved in recognition of its cultural and historical significance to African-American and European-American cultures. The plantation grounds include slave cabins, a gin house, and gardens. The property has served in many capacities over the years including a Confederacy Hospital, a burial ground for slaves and Union soldiers, and a headquarters office for the Freedmen's Bureau.

Touring a plantation can be emotionally draining, so after grabbing a quick bite at Leon's Oyster Shop, head to the South Carolina Aquarium to

lighten the mood. My main reason for visiting this aquarium was to tour its renowned sea turtle hospital and rehabilitation center. Guests are given the chance to learn about all of the turtles at the center including how they were injured as well as their path the recovery and ultimate release back into the ocean. The aquarium also features a wonderful stingray touch pool where guests can feed the rays. I've done this activity many times in the past, but I can't remember the last time the rays were so excited and friendly.



After a long day of touring the city, head to The Loutrel, a brand-new boutique hotel in the heart of downtown Charleston. The elegantly appointed property is conveniently located to almost every attraction in the city and just a block away from the City Market. The 50-room property has a 24-hour fitness center, mezzanine level where friends can gather and enjoy complimentary snacks and beverages as well as a rooftop patio boasting panoramic views of the city. My corner room contained a living area, large bedroom with king-size bed and a bathroom complete with a walk-in shower. The property is so new, I am pretty confident that I may have been the first guest to stay in that particular room. After a quick wardrobe



change, grab a signature cocktail at Veranda Lounge before heading out for the evening.

For dinner, check out The Grocery, about a 25-minute walk from the hotel. Begin your meal with the Marinated Beet, served with Granny Smith apple, walnut, feta, and herb-tahini yogurt. The restaurant prides itself of its fresh produce and this dish was a testament to their vision. If you visit with family or friends, I recommend sharing the Lowcountry Seafood Pilau, basically Charleston's version of paella, served with shrimp, clams and fried fish over a bed of rice.

Charleston is home to one LGBTQ bar, so after dinner at The Grocery, head over to Dudley's on Ann, the oldest gay bar in the city. The space hosts drag performances throughout the week as well as a small dance floor.

Even though there is only technically one LGBTQ nightlife venue in the city, the people of Charleston are pretty laid back and non-judgmental. It has an East Coast sophistication and many of the locals told me they feel comfortable expressing affection in non-LGBTQ specific establishments as well.

I had the opportunity to speak with Harlen Greene, a local historian and archivist who most recently began a project to collect materials and documentation about Charleston's LGBTQ history. "Charleston prides itself in its history but sells various versions of its history to people," Green mentioned. "History is an elite club, so finally LGBTQ people came and started telling me about their history."

In 2018, an initiative called The Real Rainbow Row was launched, to collect photographs, diaries, memoirs, religious and institutional records, as well as Pride, bar, and other items related to Charleston's LGBTQ history. Input and suggestions from individuals regarding archival materials and oral histories are eagerly sought and tax-deductible financial contributions are necessary to keep the project active.

Wake up early the next morning and enjoy the complimentary breakfast as The Loutrel before setting out to explore the city. I suggest heading south from the hotel as that is where many of the stately mansions are located. As you get closer to the tip of the peninsula, the houses become grander in stature. Swing by Rainbow Row, a collection of 13 colorfully painted homes along East Bay Street. It isn't a gayborhood unfortunately, but it does make for some wonderful Instagram photos. End your tour at Riley Waterfront Park, home of the city's iconic Pineapple Fountain.

Before you depart Charleston, stop by Rodney Scott's BBQ for a taste of true South Carolina BBQ. The award-winning establishment is home to delicious melt-in-your-mouth BBQ and is famous for their pulled pork. I decided to try a little of everything, but given how much I walked on this trip, I decided to treat myself.

To book your Charleston gaycation, visit www.Orbitz.com/Pride
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Photo credit IG @kirk_thorn



Deep Fried Everything On A Stick and More

BY LINDA RAINES | PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MINNESOTA STATE FAIR



Heat waves shimmering above asphalt and concrete, dust motes shining and floating in the streaming sunlight, raised upward by the tread of thousands of feet, the heady scent of multitudes of vats filled with cooking oil and frying batter-coated delicacies, children shrieking with laughter on the giant slide and whirling sky swings, the cacophony of voices from the midway, horses neighing, cows mooing....it can only be that glorious highlight of the summer season, those twelve golden days that cap off the end of August known as the Minnesota State Fair.

The State Fair is just around the corner, and the excitement is ramping up for the eager thousands who will be streaming through the ticket gates every day yearning to dig into a bucket of Sweet Martha's cookies, devour Pronto Pups and sample deep-fried-everything-on-a-stick until the sun goes down and the last notes from the Grandstand concerts die away.

One might think that the Fair would appeal only to rural out-staters, FFA kids, and folks wanting to gorge on fried food and then making themselves sick on the Midway rides, but nothing could be further from the truth. The Great Minnesota Get Together offers an eye-popping array of activities, crafts, art, food, music, competitions, shopping, interactive learning, and family fun to suit the tastes of nearly everyone.

Let's face it....while there are many attractions on offer, one of the biggest is the food, and nobody does food quite like the Minnesota State Fair. After all, when you announce that you're heading out to the Fair, what's the first thing that your friends often ask? That's right—"what are you planning on eating this year?" The obvious answer, of course, would be "EVERYTHING!"

In addition to the tried-and-true classics such as Sweet Martha's, mini-donuts, cheese curds, and fresh French fries, the Fair is offering a number of new foods to tantalize your taste buds this year, from vegan nosh to unique soul food to both sweet and savory delights.

Here are just a few of the newest delectable culinary tidbits awaiting you this year.

- **Poultrygeist** and **Steak-xorcist** (The Herbivorous Butcher): This unique new



The Herbivorous Butcher's Poultrygeist

vendor, previously featured on *Lavender's Dine & Drink* issue, is going to be offering two vegan entrees—Poultrygeist, which is their version of fried chicken topped with sausage gravy and French fried onion on Texas toast, and Steak-xorcist, a chicken fried steak topped with sausage gravy and French fried onions on Texas toast. Can't decide which one you want? Combine both of them in the Monster Mash!

- **Breakfast Gnocchi** (The Blue Barn): Planning to hit the Fair early in the morning? Start off your day with this delightful bed of potato gnocchi topped with scrambled eggs, bacon, pesto cream, shallots and balsamic glaze.

- **Minne Hot Hot** (RC's BBQ): Delicious smoked rib tips tossed in Nashville Hot Sauce, served with Comeback Sauce. Just be sure to not wear your white t-shirt!

- **Soulsicle** (Soul Bowl): Another new vendor, Soul Bowl, is offering up its official new food, the Soulsicle. You won't soon forget this fried chicken-on-a-stick that is topped with candied yam sauce, cornbread crumble, mac-and-cheese seasoned cheddar cheese, hot sauce and green onions.

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The Mighty Midway



The Blue Barn's Breakfast Gnocchi



Diana Ross

• **Celebration Cake On-A-Stick** (Mancini's al Fresco): This mini version of Mancini's almond-infused house white cake that can be personalized on-site with text to celebrate a special occasion or favorite fair fan. And, of course...it's on a stick!

After filling your belly with more sinfully delicious food than could ever be good for anyone, sitting down to digest might sound like a plan, and what could be better than taking in a concert while you do it? The Grandstand Concert Series has lined up a set of musical artists that should appeal to anyone's taste.

Alice In Chains and **Breaking Benjamin** with special guests **Bush** open the Fair on August 25th with the GRAMMY® nominated band that formed in Seattle in 1987 bringing their amazing blend of alternative rock, grunge, and indie sound to the Grandstand. Breaking Benjamin has had ten songs that reached number one on the charts, and Bush, with lead vocalist and guitarist Gavin Rossdale, is a name that is familiar to many with their string of 23 consecutive Top 40 hit singles.

Counting Crows, with special guest **The Wallflowers**, take the stage on Friday, August 26th with their soulful and intense take on timeless rock and roll. Front man Adam Duritz and the band have been nominated for an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song at the 2005 Academy Awards, a Golden Globe nomination for Best Original Song, and a GRAMMY® Award nomination for Best Song Written for a Motion Picture, Television or Other Visual Media for their hit "Accidentally in Love" from the animated motion picture *Shrek 2*.

The Current's Music-On-A-Stick featuring **Portugal. The Man** and **Manchester Orchestra** with special guest Minneapolis-based indie rock trio **Bad Bad Hats** bursts upon the stage on Saturday, August 28th. This eclectic lineup promises an evening of eclectic and unique sounds that will delight even the most discerning ears and tastes.

The first week of the Great Minnesota Get Together rounds out with

performances by **Pit Bull** on his Can't Stop Us Now Summer Tour 2022 and very special guest **Iggy Azalea**.

Never fear, though—the entertainment just keeps on comin' throughout the run of the Fair with diverse musical acts that should appeal to every musical taste and demographic with entertainers such as **The Beach Boys**, **The Temptations**, **Florida Georgia Line**, **REO Speedwagon**, **Styx**, the **Zac Brown Band**, and the inimitable and iconic **Diana Ross** among others.

Are the Midway rides more your thing? In addition to the old favorites, there are two new rides making their appearance this year that are guaranteed to get the scream-fest and adrenaline going in earnest.

The **Iron Dragon Coaster** will thrill and delight riders with a manic combination of hairpin turns, sudden drops, and lots of airtime. Make sure you ride this one before filling up on Pronto Pups and cheese curds! **Music Express** promises a top-speed ride—both forward and backward—through an array of dazzling lights and great music.

Whether you attend to see the variety of well-bred animals being shown by their proud handlers, nosh on the tantalizing array of foods, scream at the top of your lungs on the midway rides or try to win a giant stuffed animal for your sweetie at the carnival games, the Great Minnesota Get Together has something for everyone, so come on out and join in the fun. It's truly an experience that you don't want to miss.

See you at the Fair! ■

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The Second Time Around: Andrew Walesch

BY ISAAC JOHNSON

"Nobody hates Frank Sinatra," says Andrew Walesch, the musical director at Crooner's Supper Club in Fridley, Minnesota. For those who missed seeing the famous singer perform his iconic songs now have a second chance to experience the magic of nostalgia through Walesch. He says, "There are people that love Sinatra, and there are people that are not crazy about him. The same is true for many of the great singers of the Great American Songbook but nobody hates that music. People hate Country, people hate R&B, and people have strong opinions about music, but nobody hates Frank Sinatra." Evident by Walesch's repeatedly sold-out monthly show: Sinatra! with Andrew Walesch Orchestra at Crooner's.

The recently renovated venue provides dinner and cocktail service with a classic nightclub vibe. When Walesch's ten piece orchestra takes to the stage among a red velvet curtain backdrop, there is no mistake an enchanting evening is about to ensue. As the musical director at Crooner's, other than himself, Walesch is focused on booking the best quality acts to create memorable and wonderful nights of music for people. He has been a champion in preserving those nights for musical artists and their adores throughout the last few years. He has been integral in keeping Crooner's Supper Club alive through safe and responsible adjust-



ments to their operations, to keep artists working, and to keep us entertained during public health concerns.

Like many of the greats, Walesch's musical superpowers revealed themselves at a young age. "I was always sort of a different kid because from the time I was five, I was in boys choir. I was always singing and I was always performing," says Walesch, "God bless my mother, who was totally supportive of me and loved that I loved to sing and perform. She said, 'You need to be doing this, this is your gift.'"

When he first heard the music of the Great American Songbook from artists like Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday, "I immediately connected with that music, the songs, the singers, the style. This is me, is what I felt. How do I do this, how do I learn about this?" An all consuming fire enveloped Walesch as he immersed himself in learning the history and the performance of that style of music. Forged in that fire, a mind-blowing, consummate performer

emerged and took to the stage.

Towards the end of his college years, he started performing in piano bars and working in nightclubs. Walesch has been described as "nurturing audiences in true nightclub fashion", which is a whole different skill set than

simply performing on a stage. In order to learn to do that, Walesch says, “Just like the old entertainers would tell you, and it’s true with anything in life, there’s no replacement for doing it.” After muscle memory set in and solidified his performer expertise, he realized, “It’s about the audience. Without them I wouldn’t be there, so I don’t look at performing as something that’s like ‘oh look at me, look at how great I am.’ It’s about their experience and I think that’s a very old school approach to performing.”

When Walesch takes to the stage at Crooner’s that approach is undeniable. In an intimate nightclub setting he’s not singing for the masses or his own gratification, rather truly for those in the room. Walesch says, “You look them in the eye, you tell them a story, you try to take them on a journey. If you can connect with people and really spend time singing parts of songs to them individually, that’s an experience that is really special for people.”

In his Sinatra show, Walesch and his ridiculously talented band succeed in leading a journey through a cleverly woven set list complete with musical and Sinatra history, anecdotes, and just the right amount of audience interaction. A truly astonishing part of the show is when Walesch asks for song requests from the audience. He then immediately proceeds to the piano to play and sing his rendition of the song from memory, pulled from the archive of thousands of songs in his arsenal.

Recently, the song *The Second Time Around* was shouted out. As Walesch performed the tune about returning love, about coming home, what settled around the room was a harmony of gratefulness. Gratitude that was not lost on anyone, for the performance of music from a lost artist, for the return to live music, and for all those second chances each has experienced in their lives.

The next day the requester sent Walesch a note about what that song meant to them and why. That reaction, a testament to Walesch’s talent, is a reward for the reverence he holds for this music. He says, “These songs written by the originators of American music, I think of them like the classical composers of Europe. They were so intentional and so studied about how to write a song and they crafted these incredible lyrics with these in-



Photo by Ian Walesch

credible melodies. I think the way that they wrote songs is something that is so unique and so unusual that when you hear these songs you immediately know.”

As long as Walesch is performing those songs, audiences certainly won’t be able to forget. Walesch will soon be debuting a Tony Bennet show, releasing a Cole Porter album, and going on tour.

“I feel that I’m carrying the torch of this wonderful music, which is an honor and a privilege,” says Walesch but, “with my own style, which is why it’s still fun for me. I’m not impersonating anyone. If I were, I think I would have gotten really tired of this years ago. But I’m able to do it my way, with my group; our way.” Pun intended.

Follow Andrew Walesch on Facebook and at andrewwalesch.com. Tickets to Sinatra! with Andrew Walesch Orchestra available at crooner-sloungemn.com. ■



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Introducing Joe Charley

BY E.R. SHAFFER | PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOE CHARLEY

Lately, as an artist, I have been struggling a lot. In a world that feels increasingly unsafe and unstable, what role can artists play? There are days where I feel useless, like my contribution to society means nothing. It was fortunate for me then, that I got the chance to interview the multi-talented Joe Charley, a local musician and performer, whose passion and optimism were infectious even over a Zoom call.

Charley has been modeling, singing, and performing since early childhood.

"There were a lot of local plays, church shows, the kind of got me used to the audience and just being on stage in front of people." He tells me. "The first time that I was on stage professionally- I had just started going to middle school, and so I did a lot of work with the children's theater growing up and seeing how you were able to make it like a real possibility."

Though he was cast as an extra in a film when he was in 8th grade, his big break came in the form of a leading role in the film *"Boys Cry"*, which debuted at the PollyGrind Film Festival in 2013. The plot follows Benjamin, a west African teenager, as he navigates his way through the U.S. public school system.

"It was something I manifested." Charley said about the project. "I wanted to do something in Minnesota, wanted to something with a story that told an important story, and at the time those race relations weren't the best. How can I do my part? And what can I do? We made a film and told a story about it. It got a lot of international love. People still talk to me, to this day, about that story and what it did for them. Those are the projects that I like to be a part of."



Charley takes his role in activism just as seriously as he does his craft. He sees art and music as great unifiers and believes fiercely in the power of words to bring people together.

"I think we are all born," Charley said, "we're all made, we're here for a certain purpose. And the earlier we learn how to play our roles in life the quicker we can start unifying and together achieve greater things. There are many people who are, right now, filling in a gap for community justice. After George Floyd in Minneapolis, they're organizing parades, they're doing marches, they're holding festivals...there's a lot of people doing a lot of things and I celebrate them for that. How I know I can help is by using the platform I've been given, the platform I've been working with to start sending social messages, to start letting people know that we do exist. We have to open our mouths; we have to be present in the conversation. So that's kind of my way of activism."

As a jack-of-all-trades kind of creative, Charley had little shortage of work pre-Pandemic. However, with lockdown and isolation those gigs lessened, and his busy schedule eased up, giving him time to focus on his oldest and truest love: music.

"Whatever I did," Charley explained, "whether it was a photo shoot now or a stage play, from musicals to theatre...you know, I love the theatre, but it was the music that always got through. In recent times, a lot of loss, a lot of injustice, a lot of internal strife...music is what's gotten me through. Music is what I keep going back to, I keep writing it out. That's how I keep fighting another day."

This was heartening to hear, as the fight to protect marginalized communities is more important than ever – a fact that Charley, as an LGBTQ man of color, certainly doesn't need reminding of. When I asked about how



his sexuality influences his art, his answer wasn't what I expected- though it made complete sense.

"It's an evolving thing," explained Charley. "What's crazy is yes that is an accurate question, that is a valid question. People look at me though and that's not the first thing that they see. And all of these layers to me I think I get a better chance to explain it through my writing. Through my music, through the stories that I tell...like with so much intersectionality there's not really one hat I can wear. Because I'm Afro-Latino as well, but not everyone sees that. People see what they see. And I think once my music gets out there...people start understanding a little clearer... but to me I've always been me."

Charley recently released his first mixtape, titled *"For You"*, dedicated to his brother who passed away in 2020. He describes it as a 'collection of feelings'- reacting to the grief and loss that permeated that year. His follow up EP (which is set to be released this November) takes a more personal turn, diving deeper into who he is as an artist, and what he has learned about life so far.

Coming up, he will be performing with the Metropolitan Boys Choir at the Minnesota Festival of Champions on September 10th, as well as at the Stepping Stone Theater this winter in *"The Snowy Day And Other Stories"* by Ezra Jack Keats.

You can follow this rising star on social media @TheeJoeCharley.

"It's an exciting time, it kind of feels like the Wild West," said Charley, "so I'm excited to see what these opportunities will bring." ■



Jetset's Return Has Gone Underground

BY RANDY STERN | PHOTOS COURTESY OF JETSET



Jetset is back!

It took a pandemic to re-introduce us to one of the most unique and stylish venues for LGBTQ nightlife. You won't find them at their longtime Minneapolis' North Loop location, a location that had been their home for 17 years.

They've gone Underground.

Susan Liesch and Peter Kiriara, the partners, owners and operators of Jetset Underground, reintroduced us to their famed venue in a new space not far from their old one. They opened the new space inside the Garland Building on East Hennepin Avenue on June 8, taking over the space once occupied by Honey.

In light of the establishment's reboot, Liesch and Kiriara took us through the timeline of Jetset's past. "Originally," said Liesch and Kiriara, "Jetset was more of a lounge environment to fill a niche bridging the neighborhood bar and gay club. Overtime we introduced DJs when bar time changed to 2 am, becoming more of a party setting on weekends with fun music and dancing."

Liesch and Kiriara further explained that in time "as the North Loop neighborhood literally became one of the hottest districts in the nation, the owners of our building, as well as many others, felt it was a good time to sell! The new owner, a developer, of course, made promises not kept along with rising rents, therefore deciding it was in our best interest to look elsewhere and vacate Jetset's original home after 17 years."

"We persevered and looked at every possible venue in every possible area within Minneapolis from upcoming fringe areas," continued Liesch and Kiriara, "South and a little North, NE neighborhoods meeting with not so-happy-neighbors, back to expensive North Loop and the heart of Downtown."

Just like everything else in the hospitality and nightlife world, the COVID-19 Pandemic paused Liesch's and Kiriara's plans. A year-and-a-half later, they found their new home for Jetset on East Hennepin.

So far, according to Liesch and Kiriara, Jetset Underground "has been enthusiastically received by both longtime Jetsetters and a whole new and diverse generation of the [LGBTQ] community, and we are grateful for the



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warm welcome back!”

“With that said,” Liesch and Kiriara further explained, “#JSU (Jetset Underground’s hashtag) offers familiarity that patrons have already observed and appreciate. We feel we have successfully integrated signature fixtures into the new space like lighting and furnishings, recreating our back-lit liquor shelves behind the bar. Our new bar top is a beautiful natural stone, quartzite, which screams old world, and of course, white stone walls!”

With memories of Jetset in the back of our community’s minds, what should we expect from the new Jetset Underground? “We think what sets #JSU apart from other venues is our size,” explained Liesch and Kiriara. “We are not a huge club. We are like hosts hosting a party where you come for a drink or two in a unique and safe environment with fun music. Maybe you’ll meet up, maybe not, it’s not the focus. We are also proud to offer our Happy Hour food menu from Chef Andrew Schiff of Oak&Fig! Delicious, fresh and simple options to nosh on with a cocktail at the bar.”

The reboot of Jetset Underground is not just the act of opening of a new space for LGBTQ patrons. There is a lot more at stake. As Liesch and Kiriara explained: “Especially in these times, small business owners are imperative not just for the [LGBTQ] community but for the vitality and creativity of cities. We brought our vision to life and are excited to be a part of the Minneapolis scene once again.”

With recent movement on the fate of LGBTQ bars and clubs – namely the recent announcement of the sale of the eagleBOLTbar, it is a welcomed change to see a new place for us to go to – even if it’s a reboot of a favorite establishment of ours. ■

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Personal Pronouns Change the World One They at a Time

BY TERRANCE GRIEP

Bimbo. Lilith. Sojourner. Sisters.

These were titles considered and rejected for the publication that debuted in January 1972 as *Ms. Magazine*. The periodical was intended as a voice for American feminism, of course, but its settled-upon name also represented the furtherance of an ongoing cultural debate. Women's libbers were championing the wide use of the magazine's titular honorific, a marriage-status-neutral shortening of the word "Mistress," as a replacement for the domestic-situation-dependent Mrs. or Miss.

And, as such a furtherance, *Ms. Magazine* was entirely potent. Just one month after the publication's debut, the US Government Printing Office approved using Ms. in official documents, plucking the expression out of society's bra-burning fringes and shoehorning it into the Yankee doodle zeitgeist. Although the consequential transformation of language and culture might have felt overwhelming to some—*The New York Times* used Mrs. and Miss until 1986, for instance—the eventual orthodoxing of Ms. represented a critical affirmation of American women.

Two generations later, star-spangled culture struggles with a similar-but-more-complicated debate which smashes two of this post-Puritan society's hottest hot buttons: sex and gender. Sex, in the context of this examination, is relatively simple—it's the location of one's ovaries upon birth. If these latent reproduction organs are inside one's body on that blessed day, that person is female; if these latent reproduction organs are outside one's body on that blessed day, that person is male, doo-dah, the end.

Gender, in the context of this discussion, is potentially complex—it's how any given person identifies. The potentially complex notion of gender has recently become even more potentially complex...or, more accurately, the discussion of gender's always-existing complexity has become more mainstream.

Often, birthed persons identify as their birth sex: someone with girl parts identifies as a girl, and someone with boy parts identifies as a boy, and Jamie Lee Curtis identifies as Jamie Lee Curtis, doo-dah, the end. Such folk are naturally part of the potentially-complex conversation, known by the scientific name of *Cisdo gendericus*—that is, "cisgender" for non-Latin discussions and "cis" for online ones.

Sometimes, though, birthed persons do not



identify with their birth sex: someone with girl parts identifies as a boy, for instance, or someone with boy parts identifies as a girl, or as someone in between. Such folk are, of course, *Gendus bendus transcendolia*, less scientifically known as transgender.

This nuanced notion of identity demands a nuanced application of language, especially of those sentence-efficiency-lending third person terms that occasionally substitute for proper nouns, known by word researchers as *Person-placeorthingus substitutnus*, or pronouns. The key to understanding this issue is that it's gender which is reflected in pronouns, not sex—in other words, it's not the parts, it's the self-perception...hence, the potential complexity.

Managing this potential complexity might visit breath-shortening discouragement upon the well-meaning, pronoun-wielding Describer, but soldiering through bestows rich rewards. The proper use of pronouns affirms the selfness of the Described, acknowledging that that person knows more about his, her, or their intimate identity than the Describer.

Such affirmation catalyzes an inclusive environment that's important everywhere but is especially vital at school. "Research shows that students, especially when they belong to the LGBTQ community, achieve greater academic success, and experience a better school climate

when they attend education institutions with an inclusive curriculum," professes Lingoda, an international online language school, on their website.

The societal challenges of transgender affirmation aren't relegated to the loopy algorithms of a handful of marginal websites—they're scrawled across today's national headlines. "Language use in US schools and education is a contested issue," Lingoda notes. "The Florida senate recently approved a measure dubbed the 'Don't Say Gay Bill' which would prohibit school discussions related to sexual orientation and gender identity."

Like the America-wide adoption of Ms. fifty years ago, using the correct pronouns today may not make headlines when done individually, but doing so will speak volumes about the Described...and the Describer, as well. "It's important to validate and recognize trans and gender non-conforming people by using their correct pronouns and gender neutral language in English," Lingoda concludes. "It says, 'We see you, and you exist.' That is powerful for the LGBTQ community."

For more information on Lingoda, log on to www.lingoda.com/en/ ■



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Stonewall & Visibility at 34,000 feet up

BY MARK SEGAL

On my United Airlines flight from London to Newark, when boredom set in during the seven and a half hour trip, I decided to see what they had to offer in their entertainment selection. I was totally surprised to find a “Pride Collection” that featured many LGBT films and more. What was more surprising was to find a documentary that I’m in was included as part of this collection on the flight. It’s the Smithsonian channel’s “Beyond Stonewall,” which showcases the LGBT artifacts and stories behind them that are now part of the Smithsonian American History Museum’s LGBT collection, including my items from that first Pride and my personal papers and artifacts from the last 53 years of activism.

Watching the documentary and seeing myself and describing my part at Stonewall, as a member Gay Liberation Front and marching in that first Pride was a strange feeling. Seeing items that had been on a shelf in my house just a few years ago appear on the screen 34,000 feet in the sky was one of those out of body experiences.

When the Smithsonian people came and asked me to donate my items to their collection of LGBT historic artifacts, it was difficult to understand at the time. Now, watching a documentary of it on a flight over the Atlantic, returning from a tour of speaking engagements about the actions that gave me those artifacts, proved what I’ve often stated about my small, but important contribution to our movement for equality. One word: visibility.

Sitting on a plane and knowing that any one of the other passengers on that flight or on anyone of United’s networks of flights could view

a diverse collection of films about our community certainly proves visibility. My efforts to bring visibility to the community are, to me, more important than my involvement at Stonewall.

The actions, protests, arrests, and meetings over the years are what brought us visibility and ultimately led to those films on this plane. Those actions by early pioneers, especially Gay Liberation Front — which grew from the ashes of Stonewall and whose motto was Out Loud and Proud — started the movement for visibility and allowed many people reading this to be visible. That is why we have the equality we have today.

That film on that flight shows that those of us who took part in that revolutionary idea in 1969, to go from the darkness to be open and out loud, changed the world. That openness brought us a new respect for our identities, it brought us to fight for visibility for LGBT teachers and lawyers, government workers, gays in the military, marriage equality and I could go on.

Visibility, even at 34,000 feet in the air, matters. ■

Mark Segal is an American journalist. He is the founder and publisher of Philadelphia Gay News and has won numerous journalism awards for his column “Mark My Words,” including best column by The National Newspaper Association, Suburban Newspaper Association and The Society of Professional Journalists.

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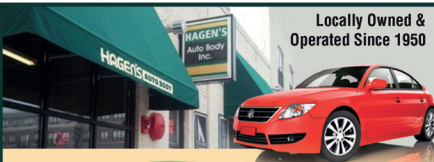
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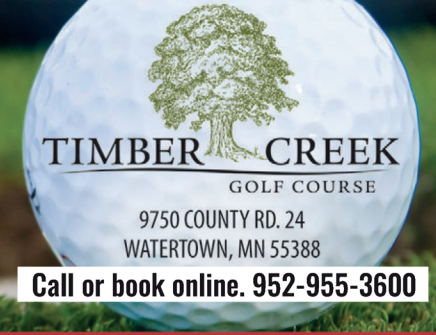
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Bad Gay: Episode 3

BY LAKEY BRIDGE

Last night, I sat on our front porch with several pistachios in my hand. I scanned the landscape, waiting for a friend to arrive. My friend was suspiciously late for our meeting.

As my anxiety over my missing friend grew, I stared darkly at the shadowy form of my spouse, who was busily weeding her precious garden in the twilight.

When we first bought our home, it had a large yard with no garden. The demands of raising kids and working prevented us from even considering a garden. But then came the pandemic.

My spouse took advantage of the time we were locked away from the world to build her own little universe. She ripped up every blade of grass and filled it with legions of flowers and vegetables, which followed her complete command. There is only one small remaining patch of grass designated for the dogs.... and I had to fight for that.

She's created a world teeming with living things that have zero capacity to run away from her, question her judgement or give her sass. In other words, the antithesis of the noisy, rambunctious, and restless living thing that she's married to.

I also took advantage of the pandemic to take up a new hobby. My goal was to make friends with at least one member of the neighborhood wildlife.

Little did I know at the time that our objectives would collide in such a bloody conflict.

My initial attempts to befriend wildlife didn't go well. It turns out that most animals are suspicious of large, beige creatures with unruly hair, even if they are carrying a fistful of delicious seeds. It probably didn't help that I'd lie in quiet wait for an unsuspecting animal to wander into the yard, only to surprise it by chasing after it and asking it if it wanted to be friends. They all ran away, never to return. Even the skunks.

But then one day, I was sitting on the steps of our front porch eating pistachios. A chipmunk suddenly appeared from under the umbrella of one of my spouse's carefully tended hostas. It sniffed the air and looked at me. It didn't run away. I was too surprised to bellow out a greeting. Instead, I tossed a nut in its direction. It grabbed it and scampered back into the garden.

That night, I bought an enormous bag of pistachios. I spent the next week on the porch placing the nuts ever closer to me. By the end of the week, the chipmunk had scaled most of the steps and was within arm's reach. By the following week, it was eating out of my hand. Instead of grabbing it and hightailing it back to the garden, it stuffed it into its cheek and reached for another and another.

Up until this point, my spouse had shown

little interest in my hobby—mainly because I was failing miserably, and it was keeping me out of her hair. But on the day that the chipmunk first took a nut from my palm, I made the mistake of dashing into the house and reporting the good news.

"A chipmunk!" she yelled in horror. "It will destroy my garden!" She marched to the garage and grabbed a large garden instrument.

"What is that thing?" I asked nervously as I followed her into the front yard.

"A hoe!" she said. "I'm going to kill that chipmunk."

"A hoe? Since when do we have a hoe? We live in the suburbs not on a farm." But she was in no mood to listen to logic. The chipmunk was gone by the time we arrived in the front yard, but our argument was just beginning. Over the past two years, I've heroically thwarted every attempt on my chipmunk's life.

During the pandemic, our world has become so small that we've run out of meaty stuff to argue about. So, it's come down to flowers and rodents.

Last night, as I rattled pistachios in my fist, waiting for my chipmunk to show, my spouse whacked at weeds with her hoe. "I didn't kill it," she said, without me having to ask the question. And just then, the chipmunk skittered over her shoe and up the steps. ■

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